DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 450 421 CS 217 472

AUTHOR Stern, Lois W.
TITLE Literature and the Young Child, Part Two: Ages 3-7+. Strengthening Your Child's Vocabulary and Memory.
PUB DATE 2001-00-00
NOTE 12p.; For Literature and the Young Child, Parts 1-4, see CS 217 471-474.
AVAILABLE FROM For full text: http://www.kidstories.com/article2.html.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom (055) -- Opinion Papers (120) -- Reference Materials - Bibliographies (131)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Annotated Bibliographies; *Child Development; *Childrens Literature; *Memory; Parent Participation; *Reading Aloud to Others; *Vocabulary Development; *Young Children
IDENTIFIERS *Predictive Reading; Response to Literature

ABSTRACT

This paper, two of four on literature and the young child, focuses on two ways the simple act of a parent reading to a child during the early years helps the child grow into a successful reader. The two ways are: reading to the young child helps him or her build a rich vocabulary which in turn will help strengthen his or her memory skills; and reading to the young child will help him or her learn how to make predictions. The paper contains a 7-item annotated bibliography (No. 3) which recommends books which are good vocabulary boosters and memory enhancers; and another 6-item annotated bibliography (No. 4) which recommends books to help children make predictions. (NKA)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 450 421

Literature and the Young Child

Part Two: Ages 3 - 7+

by Lois W. Stern

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
L.W. Stern
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

Strengthening Your Child's Vocabulary and Memory

JUST FOR KIDS

This is the second of four articles in a series about *Literature and the Young Child*. If you missed Part One, do start there.

This article focuses on two more ways the simple act of reading to your child during the early years helps her grow into a successful reader.

- **Reading to your young child helps him build a rich vocabulary, which in turn will help strengthen his memory skills.**
- **Reading to your young child will help her learn how to make predictions.**

- **3) Your child's vocabulary and memory skills grow as he listens to stories and talks about them.:**

He learns new words he would be unlikely to hear in everyday conversations. *Porridge* becomes a familiar word to the child who listens to the story of *Goldilocks and The Three Bears*. You are probably thinking:

> ***Is it so important to know the word porridge? Can't children become successful readers without knowing that word?***

Of course they can! But an interest in words and curiousity about their meanings are the

CS 217 472

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

important things that happen as children hear and absorb language.

A child's vocabulary is enriched as she hears unfamiliar words repeated in meaningful contexts that help define them. For example, in Jon Obrist's book, *The Miser Who Wanted the Sun*, the main character's actions show him to be a greedy man who hoards all within his grasp and tries to cheat others out of what is rightfully theirs. Meanwhile, the word *miser* is repeated over fifteen times in the context of the

B) You can explain the meaning of a word by relating it to something within his world of experience.

Do you remember how excited Mommy was when baby Emily was born? The word elated is another way of saying very excited.

C) You can encourage him to guess at the meanings of some words - especially when picture or context clues help define those meanings.

Buckboard is a word that is hardly ever used today, but this picture can help. Can you guess what a buckboard is?

Words give us the tools to define, differentiate and express our ideas. Without words we are limited in our ability to express ourselves. But with them we have the ability to think, verbalize our thoughts, state our wants and needs, organize information, think abstractly and explain our feelings.

I have been speaking so passionately about vocabulary because I believe a good command of language is so essential to being a successful learner. Understanding words and their meanings plays another key role: Language strengthens memory. It is difficult to remember what is not meaningful. Try this little excercise. Look at the list of words which follows and then turn away from the screen and try to write them all down. Here is the list:

nail, tooth, scissor, shovel, staple, pencil, saw, pen, claw, toothpick

Were you able to figure out how these words are connected? (If not, think about things that come to a sharp point.) Just knowing this meaningful association will dramatically increase your recall of these ten items. It is the same for children. Meaning enhances memory.

See Bibliography #3 for recommendations of books which are particularly good vocabulary boosters and memory enhancers.

- **4) Your child's comprehension increases as she learns how to make predictions about a story.:**

One level of comprehension is achieved when a child is able to answer questions about information directly stated in the story.

Can you remember some of the things in the miser's house that were

made of gold ?
A higher level of comprehension is achieved when a child is able to make predictions about a story.

> ***What do you think Goldilocks will do when she wakes up and sees those bears?***
> ***If Farmer McGregor catches Peter Rabbit, what do you suppose he'll do to him?***
> ***Can you guess what's going to happen next?***
> ***How do you think the story will end?***

To answer these type questions, one must go a step beyond. The listener must both understand the story and be able to use story information to make *educated guesses* about subsequent events.

Since this article has been appearing on the internet, I have received several e-mail queries asking, *Why is making predictions so important anyway?* So perhaps I should take a moment to clarify their importance through a real life example:

It's a stormy day. The wind is howling and the clouds are darkening. I look outside and notice that the banner hanging from my front porch is flapping about noisily. Well, I could just leave it until the storm passes by. But if I stop for a moment to put together the information stored in my head about storms and banners, I might come up with this reasoning: *The sky is getting pretty black, so a heavy storm is probably on its way. From the sound of that wind, it's probably going to be banging that banner around pretty fiercely. Since the banner is made of fabric, it could rip or even get shredded in this storm. I think I'll run out now before the storm gets too bad and bring it inside.*

The above is a rather simplistic example of what can become rather sophisticated stuff. Making predictions - we do it in all our studies: before conducting a Science experiment, in recalling past historical events as a predictor of future ones, in interpreting a work of literature . . . So if you can give your child a head start in making predictions, you will be providing him with a useful life and educational tool.

Now back to reading to your young child. You don't want to be quizzing your little one and turning her into a comprehension machine. Always remember, your most important goal is to give your child the message that Reading is fun!

So keep your questioning casually conversational and brief. Inject humor by occasionally making an outlandish prediction and letting your child laugh and even correct you!

See Bibliography #4 for recommendations of books helpful for making predictions.

(c) Copyright Lois w. Stern * 1997, 2001
All rights reserved

*** About the Author: An active educator for over twenty years, Lois W. Stern has made numerous presentations and led a variety of workshops for parents and teachers. Although themes have varied, all in some way have included the use of children's books in helping to develop literacy skills. After completing a most rewarding career in education, Ms. Stern has been dedicating herself to writing. She currently is co-editor of LI EYE, a Long Island web-zine, and founder and president of *Kidstories*. Her photo-and-fact-personalized children's book and poems can be seen at: http://www.kidstories.com/**

Bibliography #3: Vocabulary Boosters and Memory Enhancers

List Compiled by Lois W. Stern

****Key to age recommendations:****

I: Infants T: Toddlers P: Preschoolers
EG: Early Grades (K-2) MG: Middle Grades (3-4)

Bemelmans, Ludwig, Madeline , Viking Press, 1939, Copyright renewed, 1967.
The Madeline series has been enjoyed for generations for its unique content, gentle humor and rhythmic texts.

In an old house in Paris
that was covered with vines
lived twelve little girls in two straight lines.
In two straight lines they broke their bread
and brushed their teeth,
and went to bed.

Madeline attends a boarding school in Paris, where uniform dress is the order of the day. Wearing broad brimmed hats with black streamers and matching yellow coats, she and her classmates have many an adventures in opportunities for talking to your child about places and events outside of usual childhood experiences. Interest in this book has been revitalized once again. Look around in the children's corner of your favorite bookstore. You may spot one or more Madeline dolls sitting on a shelf.

Awards: Caldecott Honor
Ages: P, EG

Cauley, Lorinda Bryan, Clap Your Hands, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1992.

Clap your hands,
stomp your feet.
Shake your arms,
then take a seat.

Rub your tummy,
Pat your head.
Find something yellow
find something red.

The outlandish frolic of animals and children pictured on these pages, make this book of act-along rhymes pure delight. Young children are helped to understand the meaning of words such as *stomp, shake, rub* and *pat* if you encourage them to actively participate in these actions as you read.

Age: T, P

Obrist, Jurg, The Miser Who Wanted the Sun, Atheneum, 1984.
Once there lived a man who loved gold more than anything! Although his home overflowed with golden treasures, (even his toothbrush was made of gold), he was not content. He yearned to own the golden sun, but since this wasn't possible, he settled for a golden robe *as bright as the sun itself.* When it came time to pay the tailor's children for their labor, the miser carefully hid away all that he owned except for a tiny golden thimble. But these clever children find a way to trick the miser and teach him a lesson about sharing.
The author/illustrator has created richly detailed paintings to compliment this imaginative tale.

Age: P, EG

Merriam, Eve, (illustrated by Paparone, Pam), Low Song, Simon Schuster Children's Publishing Division, 1962, 1990, 2001. A rhythmic tribute to the child's surroundings, this book exposes the young child to a marvelously rich vocabulary. The words will dazzle as much its charming, uncluttered illustrations.
Age: P, EG

Sanfield, Steve, (illustrated by Susan Gabo) Bit by Bit, Philomel Books, 1995.
Zundel the tailor saves his pennies until he has enough money to buy himself a beautiful piece of cloth. He sews it into his most prized possession - a magnificent winter coat. Bit by Bit, as the coat begins to wear, Zundel works his magic, first transforming this same cloth into a jacket, next a vest, then a cap and finally a

button. The sequence of events in this story is dictated by the gradually diminishing size of the items sewn from this cloth. As you read aloud, point out that the objects keep getting smaller. This size sequence, from large to small, presents a meaningful pattern which will help the listener remember the story and perhaps be able to retell it. The bright, joyous illustrations depict both the passage of time and a life filled with love.

Age: P, EG

Stevens, Janet (retold and illustrated by), <u>The Three Billy Goats Gruff</u>, Harcourt Brace and Company, 1987.
After the first Billy Goat advises the troll to: *Wait a bit till the second Billy Goat comes. He's much bigger*, a dialogue pattern is set for the other Billy Goats as each interacts in turn with the old troll. The gradually increasing size of the goats gives this story a meaningful sequence that will help the listener remember the story. This predictable tale with its delightfully amusing illustrations is one that children love to reenact.

Awards: A Parents Choice Award
Age: P, EG

Williams, Linda, (Illustrated by Megan Lloyd), <u>The Little Old Lady Who Was Not Afraid of Anything</u>, Thomas Y. Crowell Publishers, 1986.
A story with a cumulative refrain that invites active participation. The text and fun filled illustrations are sure to delight its audience. The things that give the old lady the scare of her life, start with a pair of shoes and end with a pumpkin head.

First, the shoes: CLOMP, CLOMP
Second, the pants: WIGGLE, WIGGLE
Third, the shirt: SHAKE, SHAKE
Fourth, the gloves: CLAP, CLAP
Fifth, the hat: NOD, NOD
Last, the head: BOO, BOO

This book is perfect for toddlers, as the repetition and active participation help them learn new words while having such fun! Children beyond the toddler stage can begin to retell this story. Because these scarey things make their appearance in a bottom up pattern, children are assisted in their recall of the entire story. (Remember how a meaningful sequence assists memory?)

Age: T, P, EG

***Please note: Most of the recommended books listed in Bibliography #2 (simple folktales, cumulative tales and circle stories) are good vocabulary boosters as well.**

(c) Copyright 1997, 2001 by Lois W. Stern
All rights reserved

Bibliography # 4:
Books to Help Children Make Predictions

List Compiled by Lois W. Stern

****Key to age recommendations:****

I: Infants T: Toddlers P: Preschoolers EG: Early Grades (K-2) MG: Middle Grades (3-4)

Alarcon, Karen Beaumont, Louella Mae, She's Run Away , Henry Holt and Company, Inc. 1997.
This is a playful story that invites each listener to participate in a search for Louella Mae. The pages are filled with action packed illustrations as this farming family embarks on its expedition. Children must make predictions about how each verse will end, assisted by both its content (context) as well as a not-too-obvious rhyming word clue.

Round up the horses!
Hitch up the team!
Hop in the buckboard
and look by the . . .

Turn the page to check your prediction. . . .(*stream*) A surprise awaits all those who uncover Louella Mae's hiding place.

Ages: P, EG

Brown, Margaret Wise, The Important Book , Harper & Row Publishers, 1964 (Copyright renewed, 1990).
The pages in this book are filled with descriptions of everyday objects and events: daisy, shoe, grass, snow, wind, rain . . . Each page begins and ends with the phrase:

The important thing about . . . is that . . . **Between the first and last lines are a series of descriptive sentences and phrases about the object or event of that page.**

The important thing about a spoon is
that you eat with it.
It's like a little shovel.
You hold it in your hand
You can put it in your mouth . . .

But, the important thing about a spoon is
that you eat with it.

After reading the first line of a new page, let your child make a prediction. ***What do you think it will say is most important about an apple? How else could you describe a shoe?*** **Remember to stress that there are no right or wrong answers here - just different thoughts. Teachers love using this book as a model for creative writing since it helps children differentiate between main idea and detail. Children love it if you 'ham it up' a bit as you read, emphasizing the first and last line of each page with a loud, dramatic voice.**

Ages: P, EG, MG

Cronin, Doreen, (Illustrated by Lewin, Betsy), <u>**Click, Clack, Moo - Cows that Type,**</u> **Simon Schuster Children's Publishing Division, 2000. When Farmer Brown hears the sound of a typewriter coming from his cow's barn, he is more than a little surprised. Imagine his amazement when his cows post a sign on the side of the barn. At first he refuses their demand, but then they go on strike. As if that weren't enough, they got the hens to join in. No milk. No eggs. See if you and your child can predict the humorous ending before you turn to the last page.**

Age: P EG

Elkin, Benjamin, (Illustrated by Victoria Chase), <u>**The King Who Could Not Sleep**</u> **, Parents' Magazine Press, 1975.**
King Karl simply could not sleep. The Royal Council tried everything - total silence to the extreme. They moved the airport, ripped up railroad tracks, tied up whispering leaves, dammed babbling brooks, walked in socks - but King Karl remained awake. Can you guess why? Have your child make a prediction before you turn to the last page.

Ages: P, EG

Inkpen, Mick, Where, Oh Where is Kipper's Bear, Harcourt Brace & Company, 1995. Even the tiniest listener will be engaged in a hunt for Kipper's Bear by pulling tabs and lifting flaps throughout this lively little story. By the last page, Kipper's bear has still not been found. Can your child make a final prediction about where he is hiding?

Ages: T, P

London, Jonathan, (Illustrated by Frank Remkiewicz), Froggy Gets Dressed , Viking, 1990.
Perhaps this forgetful little frog should have remained in bed. He wanted so much to go romp in the snow, but wasn't accustomed to the ritual familiar to most little ones - getting dressed for outdoor play. So each time he thought he had it all together, he would hear his mother calling, *Fr-r-r-r-og-gy! did you forget to put something on?* The picture clues will help children predict what piece of clothing Froggy will put on each time mother calls. Poor little guy gets so tired just dressing and undressing. Encourage the young listener to help Froggy by pantomiming the actions to match each line of the text.

He flopped back inside - flop flop flop.
Tugged off his mittens.
Untied his scarf.
Took off his hat
Pulled off his boots.

Slightly older listeners might enjoy joining the chorus of the repetitive parts of the story with the reader. Colorful illustrations depict Froggy as an endearing little character children will enjoy.

Ages: T, P, EG

Rosen, Michael, (illustrated by Arthur Robins) Little Rabbit Foo Foo , Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 1990.
If you happen to see Little Rabbit Foo Foo riding through the forest, run for cover. He's a menace, chasing after the creatures of the forest and bopping them on the head! The good fairy gives him three chances to mend his ways - or else. . . Can your little one predict what happens to Little Rabbit Foo Foo at the end of this story? The repetitive text, hilarious pictures and riotous story line will delight its audience.